TEXT SUPPORT

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Under Review

Enterprise Content Management — What you Need to Know

By Tom Jenkins, CEO, Open Text Corp.

RATING: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE "100 Most Influential People" in the world of knowledge management by *KMWorld* for five years, Tom Jenkins has been involved with the 'Net since it emerged as a major public network in the early 1990s. As CEO of Open Text Corp., he was instrumental in creating one of the first search engines that was used by Netscape, Yahoo! and IBM.

What's the reaction been to the book?

The last time I experienced this level of reaction was 10 years ago when I was talking about the importance of search engines. Every place I have talked about the issue of turning content into a competitive advantage and the necessity of a content management strategy the book has sold out.

Why do you think you have received this reaction?

In the last five years e-mail has become a much bigger deal. Most knowledge workers spend about two hours a day on their inboxes alone. There is a large amount of data being collected that the companies are now responsible for. With Enron and the Patriot Bill in the U.S. companies are now responsible for keeping large volumes of data. The problem is there is no content management strategy that gives a clear understanding of what can be deleted and when it can be deleted. Equally problematic is the lack of a strategy to manage the information in a way that makes it accessible across the enterprise to those that could benefit from access. The costs of storage are also a factor, and most organizations understand they simply can't continue to move forward without a strategy and plan.

What is the biggest challenge facing most organizations when it comes to content?

The organizational and IT challenge is to unify five or six divisions by rethinking how they use IT and store information and on the flip side to get a clear retention plan in place. A lack of clarity and strategy can lead to conflicts within an organization that make it less strategic and efficient. An example would be a corporation where the policy is all e-mails must be deleted in 30 days. Say a worker makes an important product information update or change and that this change has been communicated via e-mail.

FAST 4

Favourite author
Nelson DeMille (Spencerville, Plum Island)

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A good book …
Helps you understand

Guilty pleasure
Chocolate

Does the employee then delete the e-mail according to policy (and thus erase the background information as to why the update or change came about) or does he or she keep it for corporate continuity records? It is not strategic for an enterprise to leave this sort of decision up to individual workers.

What part of the world is in the best shape to meet the enterprise content management challenge?

The Swiss are out front on this one. This is likely because they have some of the biggest multinationals and operate in many different time zones and languages. They were also one of the early adopters of the Internet. In the book the UBS example (a Switzerland-based wealth management company) is a good one because the globalization of financial markets has introduced a new dimension of competition in the banking industry. The mobility of UBS's clients meant that they needed to have site-independent access to transaction-related documents. In the past these customer data and contractual agreements were available only to the branch that administered the account which had the potential of causing delays in authorizing a customer's transactions. Now more than 30,000 UBS employees have access to information from an enormous archive in just seconds.

What part of the world is least prepared?

Asia. They are lagging behind by about five years and I have no explanation as to why.

How serious is this challenge?

I equate it to Y2K. With e-mail and Web content doubling every two months the longer enterprises go without a strategy, the bigger the problem. As with Y2K it took some time to absorb they had to address it. When they did there was a mad dash. The hottest area of IT focus for the next decade will be enterprise content management and there will be a crunch when it comes to the talent pool.

Tech TV will air Carolyn's two-part interview with Tom Jenkins on Tech Books Jan. 30 at 10 p.m.

INSIDER

Too much security is as bad as none at all

PASSWORDS —AND AN EFFECTIVE PASSWORD maintenance regimen — are a necessary evil in the IT world. We all know we should choose hard-to-crack passwords and change them often. But our lives require a number of passwords, and it's hard to remember them all. (I've tried using a theme, but eventually, I ran out of names of obsessive 12th-grade crushes.)

Our IT departments, recognizing that we WANT to be secure but are too lazy to change our passwords and conjure up the memory of yet another teenage rejection, often force a password change on a regular basis. And there are often layers of passwords — the one that logs you onto your computer isn't the same one that accesses your e-mail or application server, for example.

Kate Prior was featured in a front-page story in the Wall Street Journal recently for her particular password hell. Prior — as attractive a 28-year-old engraving as you'll see in the WSJ — monitors drug trials, which must be a high-security job, as she must enter eight different character passwords before she can begin work. And she has to change them all on a regular basis.

Her solution is proof of Insider's First Postulate, namely, "Excessive security is as bad as no security at all, and it takes longer." Prior lists them on a Post-It note on her computer. "The IT people yell at me," she told the WSJ, but they'd yell just as loud if she called the help desk every second day because she'd forgotten one of her passwords.

So, what can we learn from this in terms of password policy? Here are a few rules of thumb:
1. Two — or possibly even three — levels of passwords should suffice for most users who aren't dealing with matters of urgent national security.
2. Systems should force periodic password changes. Every three to four months is adequate. Every three to four hours is a bit much.
3. Don't yell at me because I forgot my password. Again.

WHEN THE GOING GETS WEIRD . . .

Researchers at the University of the West of England (school motto: We Research Weird Stuff So You Don't Have To) have developed a robot that powers itself by eating dead flies. The robot creates energy from the insects by digesting them with bacteria harvested from sewage sludge. Running on eight flies, the Ecobot moves about an inch every 15 minutes. This could lead to a robot that can forage for power. I don't make 'em up, people. I just type 'em

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